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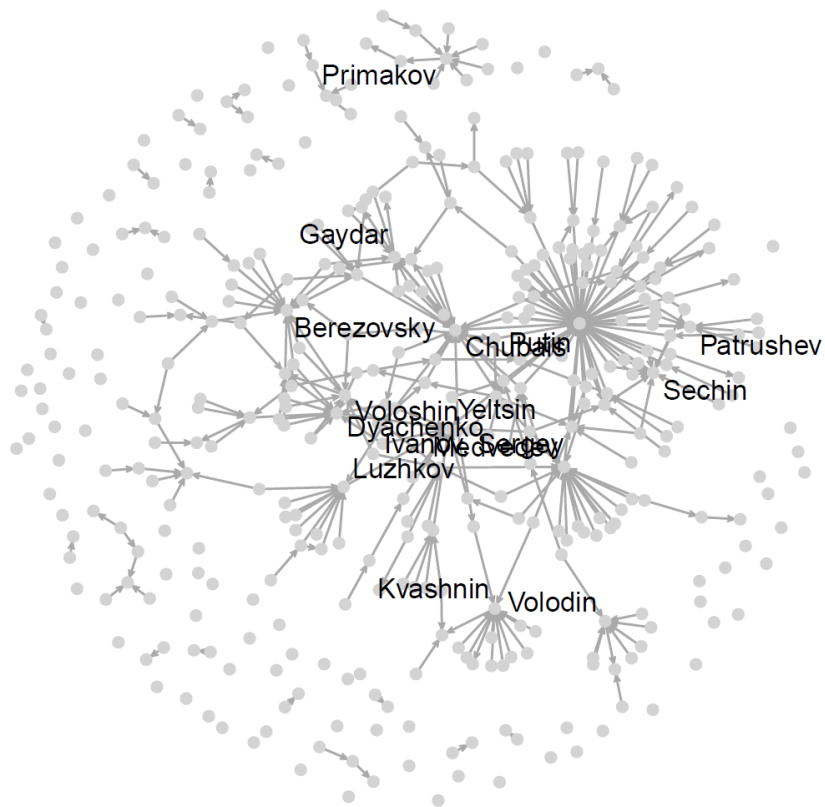
Political Networks

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1 Introduction

Politics is all about power and personal connections.

How do politicians use their social network to build a power base? How do dictators use informal networks to sustain their position? How can citizens use their political connections to get things done? How do international terrorism networks evolve? How do opposition leaders mobilize others?

This module looks at what social networks can tell us about how politics works, both in democracies and in authoritarian regimes. We will look at different kinds of political networks, learn about the fundamental components and features of networks, and discuss some key concepts related to political and social networks.

Examples will be from both democratic and non-democratic political regimes, with a focus on political elites rather than citizens. This will include patronage networks, lobbying networks, corporate elites, terrorism networks, international policy networks, and so forth.

You will also learn about some basic social network analysis tools relevant to the study of political networks, especially involving network visualisation. No prior technical skills are expected or required.

By the end of the module, students should have:

- Criticise the political world through the lens of networks.

- Evaluate how political actors are affected by their position in the social network.

- Understand the informal dimensions of politics, especially in non-democratic regimes.

- Develop familiarity with standard network measures (clustering, centrality, etc.).

- Critically evaluate some of the key social network concepts (brokerage, diffusion, learning, etc.).

- Implement rudimentary network analysis.

2 Classes

Classes take place once a week, from 12–14 on Tuesdays, in room H1.51-SCH in the O'Brien Centre for Science (Hub).

Class sessions will consist of short lectures and seminar discussion of the literature. Close engagement with the assigned readings will be essential. Extensive use will be made of small group discussions and tasks to make you more familiar with the concepts and

tools relevant to the module. This will also include some lab exercise using open-source network analysis software on some provided political data sets.

During MCQ tests and the final exam, the use of equipment with AI functionality will not be allowed.

3 Contact

The main point of contact will be the Tuesday sessions. You can also try to find me in my office, room G309 in the Newmran Building. The most reliable way to reach me is by email (`jos.elkink@ucd.ie`).

To stay up to date with developments in the UCD School of Politics and International Relations:

Web	`http://www.ucd.ie/politics/`
Blog	`http://politicalscience.ie/`
Twitter	`http://twitter.com/ucdpolitics`
Mastodon	`https://sciences.social/@ucdpolitics`
Facebook	`http://www.facebook.com/ucdspire`

4 Assessment

The assessment for this module consists of a number of different components, with the following deadlines and weights:

MCQ test 1	8 Oct (noon)	10%
MCQ test 2	5 Nov (noon)	10%
Data project	12 Nov (noon)	30%
Final exam	December	50%

For late submissions the standard policies apply.[1] It should also be taken into consideration that a late submission might result in a delayed return of feedback to the entire class. Exemptions will be granted only on the basis of illness or bereavement, documented in all cases.[2]

The data project essay will be submitted through Brightspace. MCQ tests will take place on paper at the start of the class.

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[1]`http://www.ucd.ie/governance/resources/policypage-latesubmissionofcoursework/`.
[2]`https://www.ucd.ie/science/study/currentundergraduatesciencestudents/extenuatingcircumstances/`.

Data project

In the class on 15 October you will get familiar with a free software package for the visualisation of social networks, Gephi.[3] If you have a laptop, you should install the software prior to class and bring your laptop to that session. You will be given a small number of example data sets on networks in political science and you can experiment with visualising and analysing the network data during this class session.

You will choose one of the sample data sets for your data project. The data project will consist of an essay between 1,500 and 2,000 words, where you will be providing an analysis of the network data, with proper embedding in the academic literature.

Detailed instructions on the assignment will follow in due course.

MCQ tests

During two of the classes, there will be a short MCQ test on the literature to date. It is essential that you read the literature before each class to stay properly engaged with the course, and this will then also be evaluated during these MCQ tests. The tests will consist of 8 questions each and you will have 25 minutes to answer the test.

Final exam

The final exam will be a 1 hour exam in the exam hall, after the end of term, and will consist of a set of MCQ questions and a set of short answer questions. The MCQ questions will evaluate your knowledge of the key readings and classes in the course, while the short answers will evaluate your knowledge of key concepts in political science network analysis.

Plagiarism

Although this should be obvious, plagiarism—copying someone else's text without acknowledgement or beyond "fair use" quantities, or that of your own in another submission or publication—is not allowed. UCD policies concerning plagiarism can be found online.[4]

Generative Artificial Intelligence (e.g. ChatGPT) provides helpful tools for brainstorming ideas, proofreading draft essays, helping to write computer code, and so forth. You are encouraged to make use of these tools to increase your productivity, but be warned that AI cannot be trusted as an information source and cannot write the data project for you.

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[3]`https://gephi.org`.
[4]http://www.ucd.ie/governance/resources/policypage-plagiarismpolicy/

It is a writing and coding tool, not a replacement of the author. Information and example code cannot be trusted at face value.

5 Schedule details

10 September – Introduction to political networks

Required reading

- Butts, C. T. (2009). Revisiting the foundations of network analysis. *Science*, 325(5939):414–416

- Lazer, D. (2011). Networks in political science: Back to the future. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 44(1):61–68

- Brandes, U., Robins, G., McCranie, A., and Wasserman, S. (2013). What is network science? *Network Science*, 1(1):1–15

Further reading

- Marsden, P. V. (1990). Network data and measurement. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 16(1):435–463

- Emirbayer, M. (1997). Manifesto for a relational sociology. *American Journal of Sociology*, 103(2):281–317

- Castells, M. (2000). Materials for an exploratory theory of the network society. *British Journal of Sociology*, 51(1):5–24

- Huckfeldt, R. (2009). Interdependence, density dependence, and networks in politics. *American Politics Research*, 37(5):921–950

- Ward, M. D., Stovel, K., and Sacks, A. (2011). Network analysis and political science. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 14(1):245–264

- Victor, J. N., Montgomery, A. H., and Lubell, M. (2017). Introduction: The emergence of the study of networks in politics. In Victor, J. N., Montgomery, A. H., and Lubell, M., editors, *The Oxford Handbook of Political Networks*, pages 3–57. Oxford University Press

- Gross, J. H. and Jansa, J. M. (2017). Relational concepts, measurement, and data collection. In Victor, J. N., Montgomery, A. H., and Lubell, M., editors, *The Oxford Handbook of Political Networks*, pages 175–201. Oxford University Press

- Patty, J. W. and Penn, E. M. (2017). Network theory and political science. In Victor, J. N., Montgomery, A. H., and Lubell, M., editors, *The Oxford Handbook of Political Networks*, pages 147–171. Oxford University Press

For a lot of additional reading options, see: Schneider, V., Lang, A., Leifeld, P., and Gundelach, B. (2007). Political networks: A structured bibliography. Accessed 29 August 2024.

17 September – Corporate networks

Required reading

- Allen, M. P. (1974). The structure of interorganizational elite cooptation: Interlocking corporate directorates. *American Sociological Review*, pages 393–406

- Stark, D. and Vedres, B. (2012). Political holes in the economy: The business network of partisan firms in hungary. *American Sociological Review*, 77(5):700–722

- Heemskerk, E. M., Daolio, F., and Tomassini, M. (2013). The community structure of the european network of interlocking directorates 2005–2010. *PloS One*, 8(7):e68581

- Huijzer, M. J. and Heemskerk, E. M. (2021). Delineating the corporate elite: Inquiring the boundaries and composition of interlocking directorate networks. *Global Networks*, 21(4):791–820

Further reading

- Mills, C. W. (1956). *The Power Elite*. Oxford University Press

- Mintz, B. and Schwartz, M. (1981). Interlocking directorates and interest group formation. *American Sociological Review*, pages 851–869

- Kono, C., Palmer, D., Friedland, R., and Zafonte, M. (1998). Lost in space: The geography of corporate interlocking directorates. *American Journal of Sociology*, 103(4):863–911

- Burris, V. (2005). Interlocking directorates and political cohesion among corporate elites. *American Journal of Sociology*, 111(1):249–283

- Carroll, W. K. and Sapinski, J. P. (2010). The global corporate elite and the transnational policy-planning network, 1996-2006: A structural analysis. *international Sociology*, 25(4):501–538

- Knoke, D. and Kostiuchenko, T. (2017). Power structures of policy networks. In Victor, J. N., Montgomery, A. H., and Lubell, M., editors, *The Oxford Handbook of Political Networks*, pages 91–113. Oxford University Press

- Wang, W.-K., Lu, W.-M., Kweh, Q. L., Nourani, M., and Hong, R.-S. (2021). Interlocking directorates and dynamic corporate performance: the roles of centrality, structural holes and number of connections in social networks. *Review of Managerial Science*, 15:437–457

- See also the CORPNET research project at `https://corpnet.uva.nl/about/`.

24 September – Lobbying and policy networks

Required reading

- Carpenter, D., Esterling, K., and Lazer, D. (2003). The strength of strong ties: A model of contact-making in policy networks with evidence from us health politics. *Rationality and Society*, 15(4):411–440

- Haunss, S. and Kohlmorgen, L. (2010). Conflicts about intellectual property claims: The role and function of collective action networks. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 17(2):242–262

- Heaney, M. T. and Strickland, J. M. (2017). A network approach to interest group politics. In Victor, J. N., Montgomery, A. H., and Lubell, M., editors, *The Oxford Handbook of Political Networks*, pages 433–452. Oxford University Press

Further reading

- Heinz, J. P., Laumann, E. O., Salisbury, R. H., and Nelson, R. L. (1990). Inner circles or hollow cores? Elite networks in national policy systems. *Journal of Politics*, 52(2):356–390

- Henry, A. D. (2011). Ideology, power, and the structure of policy networks. *Policy Studies Journal*, 39(3):361–383

- Henry, A. D. (2017). Network segregation and policy learning. In Victor, J. N., Montgomery, A. H., and Lubell, M., editors, *The Oxford Handbook of Political Networks*, pages 515–533. Oxford University Press

- Fischer, M. (2017). Institutions and policy networks in europe. In Victor, J. N., Montgomery, A. H., and Lubell, M., editors, *The Oxford Handbook of Political Networks*, pages 833–854. Oxford University Press

- Berardo, R., Alcañiz, I., Hadden, J., and Jasny, L. (2017). Networks and the politics of the environment. In Victor, J. N., Montgomery, A. H., and Lubell, M., editors, *The Oxford Handbook of Political Networks*, pages 611–628. Oxford University Press

- Joosse, A. P. and Milward, H. B. (2017). Health policy networks. In Victor, J. N., Montgomery, A. H., and Lubell, M., editors, *The Oxford Handbook of Political Networks*, pages 629–649. Oxford University Press

- Klofstad, S. D. M. C. A. and Sokhey, A. E. (2017). Discussion networks. In Victor, J. N., Montgomery, A. H., and Lubell, M., editors, *The Oxford Handbook of Political Networks*, pages 515–533. Oxford University Press

1 October – Policy diffusion

Required reading

- Braun, D. and Gilardi, F. (2006). Taking 'Galton's Problem' seriously. Towards a theory of policy diffusion. *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 18(3):298–322

- Murdie, A. and Polizzi, M. (2017). Human rights and transnational advocacy networks. In Victor, J. N., Montgomery, A. H., and Lubell, M., editors, *The Oxford Handbook of Political Networks*, pages 715–732. Oxford University Press

- Dornschneider-Elkink, J. A., Grund, T. U., and Strode, D. (2024). The international diffusion of marriage equality. unpublished manuscript

Further reading

- Ambrosio, T. (2010). Constructing a framework of authoritarian diffusion: Concepts, dynamics, and future research. *International Studies Perspectives*, 11(4):375–392

- Elkink, J. A. (2011). The international diffusion of democracy. *Comparative Political Studies*, 44(12):1651–1674

- Graham, E. R., Shipan, C. R., and Volden, C. (2013). The diffusion of policy diffusion research in political science. *British Journal of Political Science*, 43(3):673–701

- Broadbent, J. (2017). Comparative climate change policy networks. In Victor, J. N., Montgomery, A. H., and Lubell, M., editors, *The Oxford Handbook of Political Networks*, pages 875–899. Oxford University Press

- Elkink, J. A. and Grund, T. U. (2022). Modeling diffusion through statistical network analysis: A simulation study and empirical application to same-sex marriage. *International Studies Quarterly*, 66(1):sqab087

8 October – Patronage networks

MCQ Test 1

Required reading

- Padgett, J. F. and Ansell, C. K. (1993). Robust action and the rise of the Medici, 1400–1434. *American Journal of Sociology*, 98(6):1259–1319

- Baturo, A. and Elkink, J. A. (2016). Dynamics of regime personalization and patron-client networks in Russia, 1999–2014. *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 32(1):75–98

- Keller, F. B. (2016). Moving beyond factions: Using social network analysis to uncover patronage networks among Chinese elites. *Journal of East Asian Studies*, 16(1):17–41

Further reading

- Jiang, J. and Zhang, M. (2020). Friends with benefits: Patronage networks and distributive politics in China. *Journal of Public Economics*, 184:104143

- Schnytzer, A. and Šušteršič, J. (1998). Why join the party in a one-party system? Popularity versus political exchange. *Public Choice*, 94:117–134

- Shih, V., Adolph, C., and Liu, M. (2012). Getting ahead in the communist party: Explaining the advancement of central committee members in china. *American Political Science Review*, 106(1):166–187

- Razo, A. (2017). Bringing networks into comparative politics. In Victor, J. N., Montgomery, A. H., and Lubell, M., editors, *The Oxford Handbook of Political Networks*, pages 789–815. Oxford University Press

15 October – Network characteristics and visualisation

If you have a laptop, you should install Gephi (`https://gephi.org`) prior to class and bring your laptop.

Required reading

- Gephi (2010). Gephi tutorial quick start. online document[5]

- Freeman, L. C. (2000). Visualizing social networks. *Journal of Social Structure*, 1(1):4

- Hafner-Burton, E. M., Kahler, M., and Montgomery, A. H. (2009). Network analysis for international relations. *International Organization*, 63(3):559–592

Further reading

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[5]`https://gephi.org/tutorials/gephi-tutorial-quick_start.pdf`

- Pfeffer, J. (2017). Visualization of political networks. In Victor, J. N., Montgomery, A. H., and Lubell, M., editors, *The Oxford Handbook of Political Networks*, pages 277–299. Oxford University Press

- Wasserman, S. and Faust, K. (1994). *Social Network Analysis: Methods and Applications.* Structural Analysis in the Social Sciences. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge

- Brandes, U., Kenis, P., Raab, J., Schneider, V., and Wagner, D. (1999). Explorations into the visualization of policy networks. *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 11(1):75–106

- Hanneman, R. A. and Riddle, M. (2005). *Introduction to Social Network Methods.* University of California, Riverside, Riverside

22 October – Centrality, power, and inequality

Required reading

- Granovetter, M. (1973). The strength of weak ties. *American Journal of Sociology*, 78:1360–1380

- Burt, R. S. (2004). Structural holes and good ideas. *American Journal of Sociology*, 110(2):349–399

- Chapter 10 of Hanneman, R. A. and Riddle, M. (2005). *Introduction to Social Network Methods.* University of California, Riverside, Riverside[6]

- Smith, J. M., Halgin, D. S., Kidwell-Lopez, V., Labianca, G., Brass, D. J., and Borgatti, S. P. (2014). Power in politically charged networks. *Social Networks*, 36:162–176

Further reading

- Granovetter, M. (1983). The strength of weak ties: A network theory revisited. *Sociological Theory*, 1:201–233

- Bonacich, P. (1987). Power and centrality: A family of measures. *American Journal of Sociology*, 92(5):1170–1182

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[6]https://faculty.ucr.edu/~hanneman/nettext/

5 November – Networks and opinion formation

MCQ Test 2

Required reading

- DellaPosta, D., Shi, Y., and Macy, M. (2015). Why do liberals drink lattes? *American Journal of Sociology*, 120(5):1473–1511

- Boutyline, A. and Willer, R. (2017). The social structure of political echo chambers: Variation in ideological homophily in online networks. *Political Psychology*, 38(3):551–569

- Larson, J. M., Nagler, J., Ronen, J., and Tucker, J. A. (2019). Social networks and protest participation: Evidence from 130 million Twitter users. *American Journal of Political Science*, 63(3):690–705

Further reading

- Ahn, T.-K., Huckfeldt, R., and Ryan, J. B. (2010). Communication, influence, and informational asymmetries among voters. *Political Psychology*, 31(5):763–787

- Leifeld, P. and Haunss, S. (2012). Political discourse networks and the conflict over software patents in europe. *European Journal of Political Research*, 51(3):382–409

- Leifeld, P. (2017). Discourse network analysis: Policy debates as dynamic networks. In Victor, J. N., Montgomery, A. H., and Lubell, M., editors, *The Oxford Handbook of Political Networks*, pages 301–325. Oxford University Press

- Yang, S. and González-Bailón, S. (2017). Semantic networks and applications in public opinion research. In Victor, J. N., Montgomery, A. H., and Lubell, M., editors, *The Oxford Handbook of Political Networks*, pages 327–353. Oxford University Press

- Santoro, L. R. and Beck, P. A. (2017). Social networks and vote choice. In Victor, J. N., Montgomery, A. H., and Lubell, M., editors, *The Oxford Handbook of Political Networks*, pages 383–406. Oxford University Press

- Siegel, D. A. (2017). Democratic institutions and political networks. In Victor, J. N., Montgomery, A. H., and Lubell, M., editors, *The Oxford Handbook of Political Networks*, pages 817–832. Oxford University Press

12 November – Networks and collective action

Data project due

Required reading

- Siegel, D. A. (2009). Social networks and collective action. *American Journal of Political Science*, 53(1):122–138

- Chen, Z., Oh, P., and Chen, A. (2021). The role of online media in mobilizing large-scale collective action. *Social Media + Society*, 7(3):20563051211033808

- Masterson, D. (2024). Refugee networks, cooperation, and resource access. *American Political Science Review*, 118(3):1398–1414

Further reading

- McClurg, S. D. (2003). Social networks and political participation: The role of social interaction in explaining political participation. *Political Research Quarterly*, 56(4):449–464

- Scholz, J. T., Berardo, R., and Kile, B. (2008). Do networks solve collective action problems? Credibility, search, and collaboration. *Journal of Politics*, 70(2):393–406

- Chen, Y.-W. (2011). Transporting conflicts via migratory routes: A social network analysis (SNA) of Uyghur international mobilization. NTS-Asia Research Paper, Nr 5

- Rolfe, M. and Chan, S. (2017). Voting and political participation. In Victor, J. N., Montgomery, A. H., and Lubell, M., editors, *The Oxford Handbook of Political Networks*, pages 357–382. Oxford University Press

19 November – Resistance and opposition networks

Required reading

- Andrews, K. T. and Biggs, M. (2006). The dynamics of protest diffusion: Movement organizations, social networks, and news media in the 1960 sit-ins. *American Sociological Review*, 71(5):752–777

- Siegel, D. A. (2011). When does repression work? Collective action in social networks. *Journal of Politics*, 73(4):993–1010

- Steinert-Threlkeld, Z. C. (2017). Spontaneous collective action: Peripheral mobilization during the Arab Spring. *American Political Science Review*, 111(2):379–403

Further reading

- Klandermans, B. and Oegema, D. (1987). Potentials, networks, motivations, and barriers: Steps towards participation in social movements. *American Sociological Review*, 52(4):519–531

- Gould, R. V. (1991). Multiple networks and mobilization in the Paris Commune, 1871. *American Sociological Review*, pages 716–729

- Kuran, T. (1991b). Now out of never: The element of surprise in the East European revolution of 1989. *World Politics*, 44(1):7–48

- Kuran, T. (1991a). The East European revolution of 1989: Is it surprising that we were surprised? *American Economic Review*, 81(2):121–125

- Opp, K.-D. and Gern, C. (1993). Dissident groups, personal networks, and spontaneous cooperation: The East German revolution of 1989. *American Sociological Review*, pages 659–680

- Fowler, J. H. and Christakis, N. A. (2010). Cooperative behavior cascades in human social networks. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 107(12):5334–5338

26 November – Terrorist networks

Required reading

- Perliger, A. and Pedahzur, A. (2011). Social network analysis in the study of terrorism and political violence. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 44(1):45–50

- Mullins, S. (2013). Social network analysis and counter-terrorism: Measures of centrality as an investigative tool. *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression*, 5(2):115–136

- Hofmann, D. C. (2020). How "alone" are lone-actors? Exploring the ideological, signaling, and support networks of lone-actor terrorists. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 43(7):657–678

- Milla, M. N., Hudiyana, J., Cahyono, W., and Muluk, H. (2020). Is the role of ideologists central in terrorist networks? A social network analysis of Indonesian terrorist groups. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11:333

Further reading

- Kinsella, D. and Montgomery, A. H. (2017). Arms supply and proliferation networks. In Victor, J. N., Montgomery, A. H., and Lubell, M., editors, *The Oxford Handbook of Political Networks*, pages 761–786. Oxford University Press

- Perliger, A. (2017). Terrorism networks. In Victor, J. N., Montgomery, A. H., and Lubell, M., editors, *The Oxford Handbook of Political Networks*, pages 653–668. Oxford University Press

- McMillan, C., Felmlee, D., and Braines, D. (2020). Dynamic patterns of terrorist networks: Efficiency and security in the evolution of eleven Islamic extremist attack networks. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 36:559–581